

Baha'i Burial Law

Bahá'u'lláh

Translated



Baha'i Burial Law

"The Lord hath decreed that the dead should be interred in coffins made of crystal, of hard, resistant stone, or of wood that is both fine and durable, and that graven rings should be placed upon their fingers. He, verily, is the Supreme Ordainer, the One apprised.

The inscription on these rings should read, for men: "Unto God belongeth all that is in the heavens and on the earth and whatsoever is between them, and He, in truth, hath knowledge of all things"; and for women: "Unto God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, and He, in truth, is potent over all things". These are the verses that were revealed aforetime, but lo, the Point of the Bayán now calleth out, exclaiming, "O Best-Beloved of the worlds! Reveal Thou in their stead such words as will waft the fragrance of Thy gracious favours over all mankind. We have announced unto everyone that one single word from Thee excelleth all that hath been sent down in the Bayán. Thou, indeed, hast power to do what pleaseth Thee. Deprive not Thy servants of the overflowing bounties of the ocean of Thy mercy! Thou, in truth, art He Whose grace is infinite." Behold, We have hearkened to His call, and now fulfil His wish. He, verily, is the Best-Beloved, the Answerer of prayers. If the following verse, which hath at this moment been sent down by God, be engraved upon the burial-rings of both men and women, it shall be better for them; We, of a certainty, are the Supreme Ordainer: "I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate." Thus, doth the Lord single out whomsoever He desireth for a bounty from His presence. He is, in very truth, the God of might and power.

*The Lord hath decreed, moreover, that the deceased should be enfolded in five sheets of silk or cotton. For those whose means are limited a single sheet of either fabric will suffice. Thus, hath it been ordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. It is forbidden you to transport the body of the deceased a greater distance than one hour's journey from the city; rather should it be interred, with radiance and serenity, in a nearby place."*¹

*"Division of the estate should take place only after the Ḥuqúqu'lláh hath been paid, any debts have been settled, the expenses of the funeral and burial defrayed, and such provision made that the deceased may be carried to his resting-place with dignity and honor. Thus, hath it been ordained by Him Who is Lord of the beginning and the end."*²

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 128 -130

2. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 28



*"In the Prayer for the Dead six specific passages have been sent down by God, the Revealer of Verses. Let one who is able to read recite that which hath been revealed to precede these passages; and as for him who is unable, God hath relieved him of this requirement. He, of a truth, is the Mighty, the Pardoners."*³

"Question: Which is to take precedence: the Ḥuqúqu'lláh, the debts of the deceased or the cost of the funeral and burial?

Answer: *The funeral and burial take precedence, then settlement of debts, then payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh. Should the property of the deceased prove insufficient to cover his debts, the remainder of his estate should be distributed among these debts in proportion to their size."*⁴

"Question: Is the ordinance that the body of the deceased should be carried no greater distance than one hour's journey applicable to transport by both land and sea?

Answer: *This command applieth to distances by sea as well as by land, whether it is an hour by steamship or by rail; the intention is the hour's time, whatever the means of transport. The sooner the burial taketh place, however, the more fitting and acceptable will it be."*⁵

"Question: Concerning the shrouding of the body of the deceased which is decreed to comprise five sheets: does the five refer to five cloths which were hitherto customarily used or to five full-length shrouds wrapped one around the other?

Answer: *The use of five cloths is intended."*⁶

"Question: Is the use of the burial ring enjoined exclusively for adults, or is it for minors as well?

Answer: *It is for adults only. The Prayer for the Dead is likewise for adults."*⁷

"Question: Concerning the Prayer for the Dead: should it precede or follow the interment? And is facing the Qiblih required?

Answer: *Recital of this prayer should precede interment; and as regards the Qiblih: "Whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God."*⁸

"The Prayer for the Dead (see Some Texts Supplementary to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas) is the only Bahá'í obligatory prayer which is to be recited in congregation; it is to be recited by one believer while all present stand in silence (see note 19). Bahá'u'lláh has clarified that the Prayer for the Dead is required only when the deceased is an adult (Q&A 70), that the recital should precede the interment of the deceased, and that there is no requirement to face the Qiblih when saying this prayer (Q&A 85).

3. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 8

4. Baha'u'llah, Question and Answers, No. 9

5. Baha'u'llah, Question and Answers, No. 16

6. Baha'u'llah, Question and Answers, No. 56

7. Baha'u'llah, Question and Answers, No. 70

8. Baha'u'llah, Question and Answers, No. 85

Further details concerning the Prayer for the Dead are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.A. 13.–14.”⁹

“six specific passages have been sent down by God, the Revealer of Verses

The passages that form part of the Prayer for the Dead comprise the repetition of the greeting “Alláh-u-Abhá” (God is the All-Glorious) six times, each followed by nineteen repetitions of one of six specifically revealed verses. These verses are identical with those in the Prayer for the Dead revealed by the Báb in the Bayán. Bahá’u’lláh added a supplication to precede these passages.”

¹⁰

“Division of the estate should take place only after the Ḥuqúqu’lláh hath been paid, any debts have been settled, the expenses of the funeral and burial defrayed

Bahá’u’lláh specifies that the order of precedence for payment of these expenses is first the funeral and burial expenses, then the debts of the deceased, then the Ḥuqúqu’lláh (see note 125) (Q&A 9). He also specifies that when applying the estate to these, payment must first be made out of the residue of the estate and then, if this is insufficient, out of the residence and personal clothing of the deceased (Q&A 80).”¹¹

“The Lord hath decreed that the dead should be interred in coffins

In the Bayán, the Báb prescribed that the deceased should be interred in a coffin made of crystal or polished stone. Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, explained that the significance of this provision was to show respect for the human body which “was once exalted by the immortal soul of man.”

In brief, the Bahá’í law for the burial of the dead states that it is forbidden to carry the body for more than one hour’s journey from the place of death; that the body should be wrapped in a shroud of silk or cotton, and on its finger should be placed a ring bearing the inscription “I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate”; and that the coffin should be of crystal, stone or hard fine wood. A specific Prayer for the Dead (see note 10) is ordained, to be said before interment. As affirmed by ‘Abdu’lBahá and the Guardian, this law precludes cremation of the dead. The formal prayer and the ring are meant to be used for those who have attained the age of maturity, i.e. 15 years of age (Q&A 70).

With regard to the material from which the coffin is to be made, the spirit of the law is that coffins should be of as durable a material as possible. Hence, the Universal House of Justice has explained that, in addition to the materials specified in the Aqdas, there is no objection to using the hardest wood available or concrete for the casket. For the present, the Bahá’ís are left free to make their own choices in this matter.”¹²

⁹. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 10

¹⁰. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 11

¹¹. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 47

¹². Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 149

“the deceased should be enfolded in five sheets of silk or cotton

In the Bayán, the Báb specified that the body of the deceased should be wrapped in five sheets of silk or cotton. Bahá'u'lláh confirmed this provision and added the stipulation that for “those whose means are limited a single sheet of either fabric will suffice.” When asked whether the “five sheets” mentioned in the law referred to “five full-length shrouds” or “five cloths which were hitherto customarily used,” Bahá'u'lláh responded that the intention is the “use of five cloths” (Q&A 56).

Concerning the way in which the body should be wrapped, there is nothing in the Bahá'í Writings to define how the wrapping of the body is to be done, either when “five cloths” are used or only “a single sheet.” At present, the Bahá'ís are free to use their judgment in the matter.”¹³

“It is forbidden you to transport the body of the deceased a greater distance than one hour's journey from the city

The intention of this command is to limit the duration of the journey to one hour's time, irrespective of the means of transport that are chosen to carry the body to the burial site. Bahá'u'lláh affirms that the sooner the burial takes place, “the more fitting and acceptable will it be” (Q&A 16).

The place of death may be taken to encompass the city or town in which the person passes away, and therefore the one hour's journey may be calculated from the city limits to the place of burial. The spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's law is for the deceased to be buried near where he or she dies.”¹⁴

Bahá'í

Burial

Compilation:

<https://oceanoflights.org/bahai-burial-en/>

Babi Dispensation

For details of Burial laws, see Persian Bayan, Wahid V, Chapter XII & Wahid XIII, Chapter XI

¹³. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 151

¹⁴. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 152